

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and
restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
Old Town San Diego State Historic Park

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A Father's Hand

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Juan Bandini is credited with building his San Diego home, the Casa de Bandini, 1827-1829. The complexity of the building and the huge amount of work involved meant that Mission Indians were the work force behind the building. The neighboring Casa de Estudillo was built about the same time. Perhaps the Estudillos and the Bandinis compared notes on planning and construction. Building materials were probably taken from the presidio for use in both homes.

However, there is another member of the family who should be given recognition for building the Casa de Bandini, and that is Juan's father, José Bandini. Both historian Hubert Howe Bancroft and family member Ralph Bandini credited José Bandini with building the house. Considering the closeness of father and son, it seems logical that they worked together on the project as descendant and owner Cave J. Coutts, Jr. stated in 1931. Not a lot is known about José Bandini. He was born in

Andalucía, Spain, about 1771--his family originally coming from Italy. As a young man, he went to South America, making Peru his home. There he married twice--Ysidora Blancas in 1796 and Manuela Morrelos [or Mazuelos] in 1802. Juan Bandini was born in 1800, his mother dying soon afterwards. As a Spanish officer and mariner, José traveled extensively. Juan traveled with him some of the time and studied in Europe. There were other children from these marriages. One son apparently became the Archbishop of Lima. Another son was listed as the godparent for one of Juan's sons.

As captain of the Spanish ship *Reina de los Ángeles*, José made several trips to California. Suffering from gout, the senior Bandini retired with the rank of captain of militia, an honor bestowed by Gen. Iturbide for his help in Mexico's bid for independence.

José and Juan Bandini settled in San Diego by 1822, about the time that a few citizens and retired soldiers were starting to build adobe homes below the presidio. Juan married Dolores Estudillo on November 20, 1822, in a marriage uniting two families with ties from Andalucía. Later, José served as godfather at the baptisms of three of Juan and Dolores' children.

In 1828, José Bandini wrote

his friend Eustace Barron, British vice-consul at Tepic, describing life in California. This long, detailed letter provided information about the land, people, towns, trade, etc. Unfortunately the letter contained no information about the construction of the new Bandini family home.

In the following years, José undoubtedly helped with the family, especially when Dolores died in 1833 leaving six small children. Juan married Refugio Argüello in 1835 and the family continued to expand. In 1837, José was chosen as baby Margarita's godfather.

The following year, Juan was appointed administrator of Mission San Gabriel and the family moved to that area. Sadly, by early 1841 José became very ill. Juan's correspondence to Los Angeles merchant and future son-in-law Abel Stearns illustrated his concern and care for his father. Juan requested that Stearns send him various foods to tempt the old man's appetite—rice, chocolate, coffee, a little bread. In one letter Juan Bandini told Stearns that he cannot leave his dying father to come to Los Angeles on business, not even for overnight. By April 23, Juan wrote that he was losing his best friend. José Bandini passed away on April 28, 1841 and was buried inside Mission San Gabriel.

